

# TRANSPORTATION DRIVES THE DAY



1881-1899

Waves of people board trains and move to what recently was a mostly empty state; by 1890, Florida’s population is 390,000 (doubling in two decades). Freed African-Americans make up half the state’s population in this post-Civil War era. The roseate spoonbill and reddish egret are nearly gone from the Everglades, decimated by the plumage demand for fashionable hats of the day. Entrepreneurs conduct large-scale draining to connect waterways, permanently altering the hydrology of South Florida. By 1883, the Caloosahatchee River is connected to Lake Okeechobee, lowering the lake’s water level and reducing water flow to the Everglades.

## 1881

**Hamilton Disston buys 4 million acres of the Everglades.** The cost is 25 cents an acre. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the state’s nearly bankrupt Internal Improvement Fund — recovering from the severe disruption of its infant railroad system — is seeking buyers for land. Disston, a wealthy saw works owner from Philadelphia, returns the Fund to solvency with this single transaction.

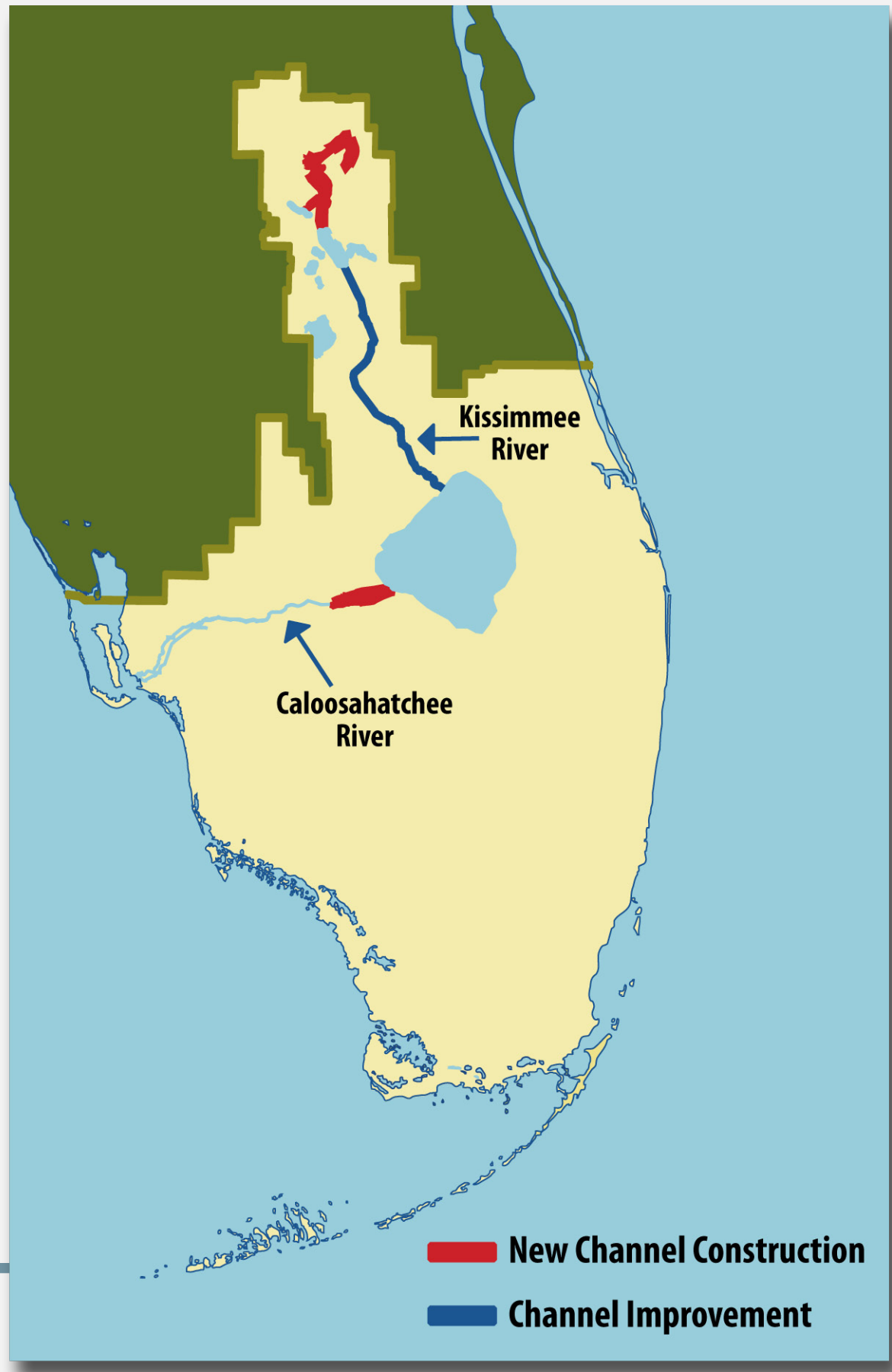


Hamilton Disston connects waterways to Lake Okeechobee in Central Florida, and by the fall of 1883 watercraft traverse from the town of Kissimmee to the Gulf of Mexico

## 1883

**Disston connects the Caloosahatchee River and Upper Chain of Lakes.**

Proclaiming he will drain the entire Everglades, Disston begins by dredging canals and connecting lakes Kissimmee, Hatchineha, Tohopekaliga and other lakes that form the headwaters for the Kissimmee River. He begins to deepen and straighten the Kissimmee River, selling the surrounding drained lands to cattle operators for grazing. With a vision of connecting Jacksonville to Fort Myers for steamboat travel, Disston blasts out the Caloosahatchee River waterfall, deepens the river and connects it to Lake Okeechobee.



Hamilton Disston Construction: 1881-1894

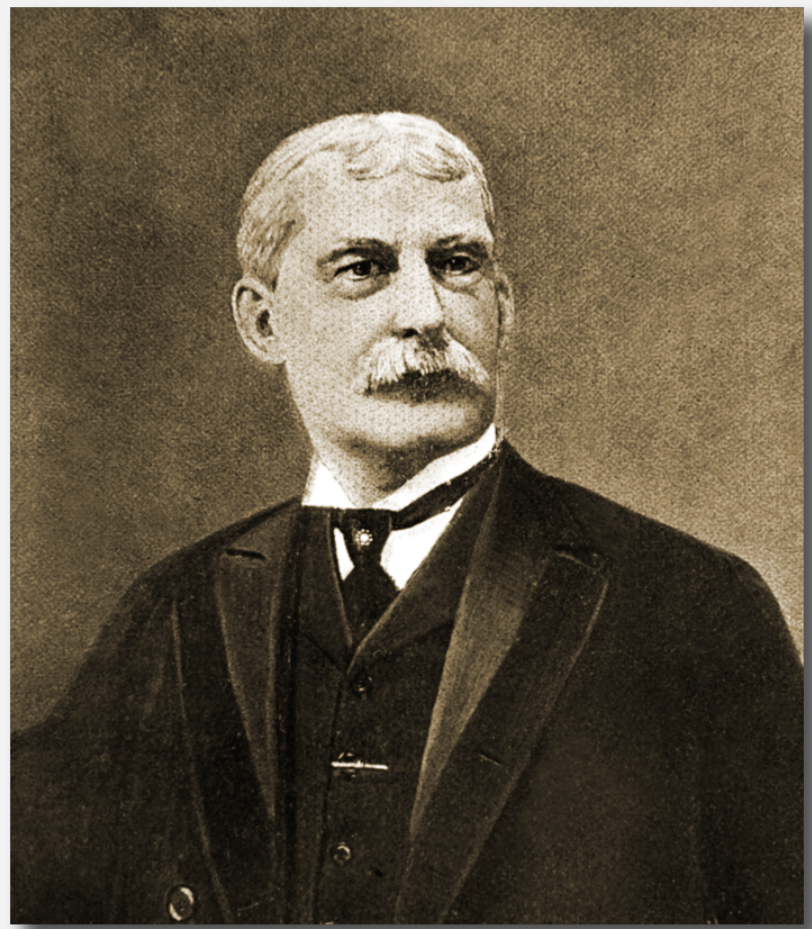


Henry Flagler buys the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Halifax River Railway and expands construction south along the east coast, arriving in the settlement of Miami in 1896

## 1885

**Henry Flagler purchases his first Florida railroad.**

Along with waterway navigational improvements, the revitalized Improvement Fund allows the state to resume making land grants for railroad development. Flagler wishes to begin service between St. Augustine and New York. While building a resort in St. Augustine, Flagler realizes the key to developing the rest of the peninsula is a solid transportation system. By 1894, his railroad extends into West Palm Beach, an unincorporated community of 1,000 people.



Henry Flagler



Adventurers flock to Florida to explore the wild and scenic rivers from the deck of a steamboat

## 1899

**Federal Rivers and Harbors Appropriations Act is passed.**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers now has authority to regulate the obstruction of navigable waterways. The construction of any bridge, dam, dike or causeway over or in navigable waterways of the U.S. is prohibited without Congressional approval. State-authorized structures may be built if the impacted waters are completely within one state and the plan is pre-approved by the Chief of Engineers and the Secretary of the Army. Building of wharfs, piers, jetties and other structures also requires approval.